



Why Re-invent the Wheel?

Sustainable development through sponsorship and network-based training

INASP, June 2010

Sustainable development is one of the driving forces behind INASP. Meeting the needs of our country partners is not simply a quick fix, but a long-term activity that focuses on building capacity in-country. Through sponsorship and networking activities, INASP is able to help with in-country identified needs and goals. This is done through a variety of means including: small grants and proposals; collaborating with like-minded organisations and institutions to make the most of an event; and peer exchanges.

Collaborative training

Whether at INASP's suggestion, a collaborating organisation's, or both, collaborative training can work on a variety of levels depending on the situation and the desired outcome. In some instances the motivation can be purely financial, but may also involve designing content together, contributing content towards a course, and/or providing facilitation. However, the main reason for collaboration is often to combine areas of expertise to meet requested or identified training needs. A specific example of this is our collaboration with the Hanoi School of Public Health (HSPH) and International Network for Online Resources and Materials (INFORM) to develop a group of "master" trainers and materials focusing on health. Other partnerships have included the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) on the Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK) distance learning course "Digital Libraries and Repositories" and Aptivate on the development of low-bandwidth website guidelines.

Collaborative Training

Working together with partners, combining skills and merging expertise to meet overall training needs.

Where it works well:

- when capitalising on existing expertise
- when pooling skills and resources to increase impact

Where it doesn't work:

- where one partner causes delays in collaboration
- when there is an uneasy working relationship between collaborators
- when roles are not clearly defined and goals are not similar

Embedding training at various levels

In some instances, the issue is not that training is unavailable, but rather the mechanism to incorporate it is. This means that new skills may not be introduced or maintained as they are not included in the curriculum or as part of the process for inducting new staff. Sometimes,

Embedding training at a national, institutional and curriculum levels

Supporting processes to enable development of training materials and courses

When it works well:

- when backed by senior management or ministry level staff
- when there is evidence to support the introduction or revision of a course or similar
- when teaching staff have the skills and expertise to implement the new syllabus

When it doesn't work:

- when there is no official support for development
- when quick changes are required
- when commitment, resources, and/or expertise are not evident

in the case of subject areas not already comprehensively covered in curricula, the best solution can be a meeting or a workshop with the relevant personnel.

An example of this is a 2007 curriculum review workshop that directly contributed to the introduction of an updated MA Library and Information Science (LIS) course at the University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. 21 students are registered on the course, which includes new technologies and skills for the digital library. In addition to this, an undergraduate LIS course is now under development. Another example is an INASP-sponsored workshop held at Mzuzu University in 2008. This workshop reviewed the existing BA and diploma courses and led to the adoption of an updated Multiple Entry-Exit Bachelor of LIS in September 2009. It began with 20 students and that number is expected to double in 2010.

Peer exchange and informal sharing

Although this can be applied at various levels, INASP's approach usually involves the transfer of skills or experience from one person to another or by a small group visit from one country/institution to another. This

Peer exchange and informal sharing

Training through example, the exchange of ideas and good practice

When it works well:

- can serve as a quick skills transfer especially when on an informal basis
- when customisation is possible to ensure practicality of approach
- when leading to longer-term partnerships and/or working institutional relationships

When it doesn't work:

- when content is too general to customise
- can be potentially expensive
- when travel or per diems allowance is the attraction
- when hosts may only present positive aspects, leading to an unrealistic impression
- when visitors are hesitant to critically question hosts

method benefits participants through contextual learning and bringing together groups facing similar issues, which, in turn, can lead to strong networking opportunities later.

A visit to the Parliament of Nigeria by a group of Ugandan parliamentary staff was supported in 2008 as was a visit by two Nepalese librarians to Vietnam. Sponsoring attendance at international conferences or the presenting of a paper are examples of how this can work.

Electronic discussion groups have played a part in this as well. Several of these groups have been set up through the online forum Dgroups, which allows strong networking and peer exchange without travel. As each of the Journals Online (JOL) have been created, a discussion group has been set up for the participants to exchange experiences and thus improve the quality of their journals. Additionally, a peer exchange visit was organised for a new member of the Nepal Journal Online (NepJOL) team to attend a JOL workshop in Sri Lanka. This provided the opportunity for him to learn the skills necessary for uploading content to NepJOL and also exchange experiences with the other participants.

An important area of our network building and peer exchange is the PERii Steering Committee (SC) meeting. This annual event brings together partner country coordinators (CC) and INASP staff to review previous activities and plan for the future. Key to this are opportunities for CCs to share their experiences, perhaps in finding a solution to a particular challenge. Many of the challenges cited are shared by other partner countries and the sharing of experiences can provide inspiration, new ideas and new solutions. As well as more formal sessions around specific topics, the residential meeting offers the chance for more informal exchanges among the countries represented. The combination of both types

of exchange encourages new relationships between countries and a greater understanding of the context of research communication in other environments.

Small Grants Scheme

The small grants scheme was developed to provide support for in-country identified and initiated activities. This demand-led, country-owned method has proven to be highly successful, resulting in innovative and low-cost activities. The main advantage has been that events are tailored to suit a particular need or level of expertise and to target those who would benefit most.

Activities such as the small grants offer a good first step in sustainable development. They require in-country identified needs, encourage development or adaptation and customisation of training materials. They also provide experience in areas such as proposal writing. For those activities that do not fall within INASP's remit, referrals are made to organisations that may be more appropriate, opening new networking and collaboration opportunities.

Financial support and small grants

Funding organised through the INASP small grants scheme, through consortium or similar body

Advantages

- country led
- low cost
- reaches a wider audience
- encourages more creative/innovative projects
- enables significant activities that otherwise may not be implemented
- collaboration and networks fostered - such as institutional, departmental and specific areas
- experience in writing funding proposals and the processes involved

Disadvantages

- may lead to dependency rather than sustainability
- may favour those with more project proposals/applications experience
- possible workplace tension if grant recipient is not deemed to be the appropriate person

INASP training materials:

www.inasp.info/training

INASP Events:

www.inasp.info/events

Small Grants Scheme:

www.inasp.info/small-grants

Peer Experience Exchange Project:

www.inasp.info/peeps